

## EDITORIAL

### And the child suffers

'Baby Richard' cases should be stopped before they happen, not settled in court

Another tragedy occurred last week when a little boy was taken away from his adoptive parents and returned to the biological parents he never knew. When family matters are settled in courtrooms again and again, we must try and develop a pattern in order to head these problems off before they begin.

In the case of a 4-year-old boy known in court and to the public as Baby Richard, the scenario was the same as in the case of the now-famous little girl known as Baby Jessica. Both children were put up for adoption by their mothers, both lived with their adoptive parents for a time, and both were returned to the biological parents when the father found out he had a child.

In both cases, and others in recent years, the biological father was the missing link. In the case of Baby Richard, the biological mother, Daniela Kirchner, helped to keep it that way as she had told her husband, Otakar Kirchner, their child had died at birth.

They were in the middle of relationship problems themselves at that time, and she had given the boy up for adoption. This could have been the end of the story but, when Otakar Kirchner found out less than two months after the child's birth that he had a son, he began his battle to have the boy returned to him, and to his wife.

That battle took four years, during which time Baby Richard was creating lifelong bonds with his adoptive parents. They were his parents, and he should have never been placed in a position that could ultimately change his life forever. And still it happened. And it will no doubt happen again.

The cloudy part is always at the time of adoption. If one parent puts the child up for adoption while the

other parent is nowhere to be found, this only leaves the door open for such sensitive family matters to be settled in a cold, unfeeling courtroom.

Who is to blame? Not the U.S. Supreme Court or federal courts, whose members are only doing their best with a no-win situation. Certainly not the adoptive parents, or Baby Richard. Not even the biological father who, in this case, simply did not know he had a son in this world.

In this case the blame can be shared by Daniela Kirchner, who lied to her estranged husband in some pathetic attempt to use a baby as a bargaining tool, and also by the system itself, which allows one parent to put a child up for adoption without thoroughly seeking out the opinion of the other parent.

Every possible effort should be made to reach the missing parent and gather a consensus on whether or not to put the child up for adoption.

If investigators had searched for Otakar Kirchner and had come up with nothing in their search, that is when the court should rule that every possible attempt was made to find him. At that time the adoption should be finalized, forever, set in stone. Then the court should be removed from this process from that point forward.

It would produce another tragedy if, in fact the Otakar Kirchners of the world were not hiding but were simply unable to be reached by investigators in such adoption cases, but it would be the lesser of two tragedies. In this case, the greater tragedy is the scarring pain felt by a little boy who had spent four key developmental years with one set of parents, only to be taken from them and handed over to two strangers.

Today's editorial is by C. Allin Means, Opinion Page editor of *The Brazosport Facts*, on behalf of *The Facts* editorial board.

**WRITE US** - There are a few guidelines for letters to the editor. We don't use anonymous or unsigned letters, and we don't print form letters. The writer must include an address and daytime telephone number, in case we need to contact you. We will not publish addresses and phone numbers. We must sometimes edit long letters. We welcome all letters, especially those responding to immediate issues. We don't print letters we determine to be defamatory or in violation of our policies on libel. We reserve the right not to print any letter. Letters should be mailed to: The Brazosport Facts, Letters to the editor, P.O. Box 549, Clute, Texas 77531.

## LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

### Peace, harmony begin at home

#### To EDITOR:

Peace and harmony for our nation may well begin in small and unexpected places where you and I are willing to invest ourselves together.

Let us all continue to seek opportunities to build those partnerships that will strengthen the fiber of our communities.

Together we can help God bless America.

Mary Ruth Rhodenbaugh  
Brazoria

### Prices just keep going up, and up

#### To EDITOR:

Wow! Gasoline sure went up overnight seems like, but I read that the average price at the pumps was \$1.07. Now, I wonder where that pump is. I'll go fill up.

And now Lake Jackson wants me to pay one-half cent more sales tax. But the good news is the gas prices and sales tax are just temporary.

Seems to me when they voted for the city sales tax some 20 years ago, it was only for a short time. I guess they have never got whatever it was (I don't remember) paid off.

I have seen a few toll bridges where the toll was supposed to be dropped when the bridges were paid off. And they have been paid

for for years, but we still pay a toll fee. I guess they forgot.

Everything seems to go up except the old folks' income. And when they do get a little raise, the cost of living takes care of that. But that's OK. We are just passing through.

Douie Gaye Reed  
Lake Jackson

### Polls don't always reveal what is best

#### To EDITOR:

Citing the statistical results of NBC and *New York Times*/CBS News polls showing, respectively, that 76 and 69 percent of Americans generally support the outlawing of specific firearms within the 1994 Clinton Crime Bill, *Brazosport Facts* editor C. Allin Means offers the suggestion that, since a simple majority of Americans favor the ban on semi-automatic "assault weapons," the debate on this issue should be concluded.

With all due respect to *The Brazosport Facts* editorial staff, this is not a compelling argument.

This country was founded on the uncompromising principle that individuals are endowed by God with certain unalienable rights which precede the establishment of government.

The sole purpose of government is to protect and preserve these rights. As Jeffrey Snyder states, "any government which abrogates any of the Bill of

Rights, with or without majoritarian approval, forever acts illegitimately."

My constitutional rights - freedom of speech, freedom of religion, freedom of the press, and yes, even the freedom to keep and bear arms - are not subject to debate or infringement, even if the majority of Americans concede to relinquishing their own.

A *Times Mirror* poll last October found that 71 percent of Americans believe that the liberal media just gets in the way of solving the nation's problems.

Does that mean that, with majoritarian approval and an act of Congress, we should force every newspaper columnist in America to relinquish his typewriter? I don't think so.

Patrick Henry would have stated that whereas I have disagreed with everything you have said, I would still defend to the death your right to say it.

I just wish that the media would work just half as rigorously to protect gun owners' rights as they do to defend their own sacrosanct right to a free press against governmental intrusion.

Steven Costello  
Lake Jackson

### Bombing used to 'bash' freedom

#### To EDITOR:

In the wake of the Oklahoma tragedy, we have heard charges from the media, elected officials and others that border on hysteria.

They have blamed everyone and everything that does not fit the left wing, big government, gun control, limited personal freedom agendas.

These accusations are coming from those who see this as an opportunity to bash freedom, civil rights and the guarantees of our Constitution and the Bill of Rights.

The president, the attorney general and others of their ilk, are throwing up a smoke screen and we should not fall victim to the misdirection they are promoting.

If one truly does not condone terrorism, why would you invite the Irish terrorist, Gerry Adams, to the White House for dinner?

We are a nation of laws, we don't need more laws, we don't need Big Brother looking over our shoulder, we don't need to restrict freedoms, we don't need more police.

What we need is for our government to exercise this zeal in investigating the Waco incident and laying all the facts out to the public and to act as the evidence dictates.

Everyone should ask, why have they stonewalled this issue for over two years? Why is the tragic death of children and other citizens in Oklahoma more tragic than the death of children and citizens at Waco?

Now, more than ever, there is a thirst among the populace for truth and action from government. In April, a Gallup Poll was released (but not highly publicized and largely ignored by the politicians) that said 39 percent of

Americans feel the federal government has become so large and powerful that it poses a threat to our rights and the freedoms of ordinary citizens.

The only surprise in these findings is the low 39 percent which represents only the tip of the iceberg.

To paraphrase something said about lies, someone was asked how they knew someone was lying. The reply, "I see their lips moving."

Tom Pennett  
Cedar Lane

### Industry pleased with Brown's move

#### To EDITOR:

I would like to make a few points of clarification and expand on the article in Friday's, April 28, *Brazosport Facts* headlined, "Industry officials not impressed by abatement vote."

First, I would like to compliment and thank Sen. Brown for making the effort to reinstate the industrial growth, and as a result, job growth incentive of school tax abatements.

When he saw that this was not possible, he introduced legislation to provide some investment incentives to help retain existing Texas industry and to bring new industrial growth to the state.

The compromise legislation, although helpful, will not have as large a positive impact on smaller industrial sites as it will larger

sites, simply because of the amount of sales and other state taxes generated will be much lower.

As a result, the tax rebate (sales, use and franchise) for a qualified plant expansion and/or new major capital project, as proposed in the new legislation, will not equal the savings associated with school tax abatement incentives.

Although the tax incentives voted by the Texas Senate are a step forward over what exists today, it still falls short of the incentives of other states and, in fact because of global competition, of other countries.

In the short term, the lack of school tax abatements will provide tax funds from those captive industries who must expand existing facilities because of the existing infrastructures.

However, in the long term, as plants take tax abatements off of the tax rolls, because they have become obsolete, and with the possibility of decisions being made for no new expansion or new industries being considered for capital investment, the state will have to find other ways of financing education.

Therefore, in the long term, the state, without competitive incentives to attract industry and business to Texas, may be going in the wrong direction in meeting its future needs.

Robert A. Lammi, site manager  
Roche Vitamins and  
Fine Chemicals  
Freeport



## Someone forgot to tell us the rules changed

There are those times when my southern, Texas background will not be subdued: the speech slows to a drawl; the walk is embedded with a slight swagger; the grin becomes lopsided.

Like last week. Walking up to the Courthouse Friday afternoon, I could see reflected in the glass the image of a woman walking up behind me who appeared to be in her mid-to late 30s. Using my right hand, I opened the door and stepped to the side. My parents taught me to open the door for others, and especially for ladies.

I cannot count the number of times when, as a young lad, I was scolded by my mother and father for "not holding the door open and letting it hit those people behind us."

Expecting the woman to walk through the open portal, as countless others - men and women, all strangers - have done when the door was held by my willing arm, I was stunned by her reaction.

Never was there a sign hanging from my neck which read, "This is a special service, tip me." Nor was I about to ask this woman to wander off to the nearest hotel with me. Rather, as a southern-bred gentleman, I was simply offering an act of modest humanity.

She stopped in mid-stride and stared at me. A stare which if a shotgun would have blown a gaping hole through my forehead.

I motioned with my left hand and offered my lopsided grin - it was Friday, I could relax a little. I was in no hurry. Just being polite.

The woman placed her hands on her hips and glared at me as though my nose



MICHAEL Q. SULLIVAN

of seconds I became that newest of victim/oppressive groups. I became one of those things we constantly hear about on the nightly news; someone responsible for all that is vile and wrong in the world. I was A.M., an Angry Male.

Or, was I? If anything, I was simply befuddled. And I can't help but wonder if that is really the problem facing a lot of us in this weird, wired decade.

One of the most striking dynamics to change the structure of humanity has been the "wife raising the kids" scenario. Sure, since time immemorial the rearer of the young-uns has fallen primarily to the female of the species. But the man was always nearby, rolling stones in the new cave or plowing the field.

Along came the mechanized, information age and suddenly daddy was long-gone. By the 1960s and '70s, all a man-child knew was mommy waking him up for school, making the meals, helping with homework, being involved in the school, etc. The father was absent, at some building doing something in an

office.

By the late 1960s the feminist movement was in full stride. Free-love was the rage. Women burned their bras and "sex" was no longer a dirty word.

And men accepted it. After all, it had been women who raised them. Men now felt comfortable getting in touch with their estrogen side; we felt at ease.

Which is the point at which the floor has dropped out from under us.

Now we are told women want to be treated as complete and utter equals, but we can't tell the risqué locker room jokes, for fear of sexual harassment lawsuits.

We were brought up to compliment women - whether on their clothes, hair, speech, whatever - but doing so now is considered either improper, unprofessional or mean. But not doing so is even worse.

Now polls say men are expected to be decisive, but any man who takes the lead is a chauvinist who wants to trample all women.

Our mothers taught us to open the door for women, though we get treated like dirt when we do. But if we don't, we're called "rude."

And the list goes on. We have dos, don'ts and dos with sub-clauses followed by nevers. The rules changed and we, the dim-witted rock-movers, have been left in the dust. Where? When? How? I don't know. But the rules changed and someone forgot to tell us.

Men aren't angry. I think we're all just a little confused.

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